Scripture History.

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OR, A

BRIEF ACCOUNT

OF THE

OLD AND NEW

TESTAMENT.

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Scripture History.

GENESIS.

THE first of the five Books of Moses contains the History of the Creation, and an Account of the Innocence and Fall of Man, the Propagation of Mankind, the Rise of Religion and Invention of Arts; the general Corruption of the World, the Deluge and the Restoration of the World; the Division and Peopling of the Earth, the Original of Nations and Kingdoms, the His ory of the first Patriarchs down tot Joseph, at whose Death it ends.

EXODUS.

IN this book Moses describes the tyranny of Pharaoh, and the bondage of the Israelites in Egypt, with their prodigious increase and multiplication; the plagues inflicted on the Egyptian King and people for refusing to let them go; their departure out of Egypt, and miraculous passage through the Red Sea, where Pharaoh and his host were drowned: the divine preservation of the Israelites in the Wilderness, the delivery of the law on Mount Sinai; and the erecting of a tabernacle by the special direction and appointment of God.

LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY.

THE book of Leviticus contains the laws and regulations relating to the priests, the Levites, and the sacrifices, with a variety of rites and ceremonies, and rules of conduct peculiar to the Jews.

Numbers takes its name from the numbering of the families of Israel by Moses and Aaron, in their passage through the Wilderness, and relates several remarkable Events which happened in that Journey.

Deuteronomy, the last of the Books, is a Repetition of the Laws contained in the preceding, with some Additions; and relates the Death of Moses, with the Appointment of Joshua as his Successor.

JOSHUA.

THE Book, which bears the Name of Joshua, is generally attributed to this great Man, who, after the Death of Moses, took upon him the Command of the Israelites, and whom God favoured upon all Occasions. We here read of their Passage through the River Jordan, on dry Ground, the taking of Jericho after the Walls had fallen down in a miraculous Manner; how the Sun and Moon stood still at the Command of Joshua, with many other divine Interpositions in his Favour in his Conquest of the Land of Canaan; his Division of it amongst the Israelites, and his Death and burial.

JUDGES.

THE Judges were those supreme Magistrates who governed the Israelites from Joshua to the Time of Saul.—These Governors were not hereditary; they were no more than God's Vicegerents, who created them, and gave them all their Authority; who raised them up to deliver his People from the Oppression of their Enemies, when they repented of their Idolatry and Disobedience. For the Lord did not utterly destroy the Canaanites, but suffered some Nations to remain to chastise the Israelites, whenever they departed from him. We have, in the book of Judges, the Jewish History, from the Death of Joshua to the birth of Samuel.

RUTH.

THE book of Ruth is placed in our Bibles, between the book of Judges and the books of Samuel, as being the sequel of the former, and an introduction to the latter. The scope of the author of this book is to make known to us the genealogy of David, who was the great grandson of Boas, the husband of Ruth, and one of the ancestors of the Messiah; and it also records a remarkable instance of her filial affection for her mother-in-law Naomi, and her pious choice of the God of Israel for her God.

I AND II SAMUEL.

THE first book of Samuel comprehends the transactions under the government of Eli and Samuel, and under Saul, the first king of the Israelites; also the acts of David, while he lived under Saul. The first twenty-four chapters were composed by Samuel himself; the remaining seven chapters, together with the second book, are supposed to have been written by the prophets Nathan and Gad, who, we are informed in the book of Chronicles, wrote the history of David, in conjunction with Samuel.

I AND II KINGS.

THESE Books are so called, because they contain the History of the Kings of Israel and Judah, from the beginning of the Reign of Solomon down to the Babylonish Captivity. The first relates the latter Part of the Life of David and his Death; the Reign and Death of Solomon, after which the Hebrew Nation was divided into two Kingdoms; as also the Acts of four Kings of Judah, and eight of Israel. The second continues the History of sixteen Kings of Judah, and twelve of Israel, to the End of both the Kingdoms.

I AND II CHRONICLES.

THE Chronicles are an Abridgment of all the sacred History, from the beginning of the Jewish Nation to their first Return from the Captivity, taken out of those books of the Bible which we have, and out of other Annals which the Author had then by him. The first Book relates the Rise and Propagation of the People of Israel from Adam; and gives a particular and exact Account of the Reign of David. The second sets down the Progress and End of the Kingdom of Judah, to the very Year of their Return from the Babylonish Captivity.

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

THE Book of Ezra includes the history of the Jews, from the time of Cyrus's edict for their return, to the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus. In it are recorded the number of those Jews who returned from captivity, with Cyrus's proclamation for rebuilding the temple, the laying the foundations, and the finishing of it, after many obstructions from their enemies.

Nehemiah, in the book that bears his name, informs us how he obtained leave from Artaxerxes to build the walls of Jerusalem, and how he finished that great work, and of the pains he took to reform the abuses and disorders, which had crept in among the Jews, during their captivity.

ESTHER.

AS to the author of the book of Esther, there is great Uncertainty. Many of the Christian Fathers attribute this History to Ezra. Others believe it to be of later Date; though most conceive Mordecai to have been the author, and join Esther with him in the Composition of it. A modern Writer conjectures, that the great Synagogue of the Jews, to preserve the Memory of their remarkable Deliverance, and to account for the original of the Feast of Purian, ordered this book to be composed, which they approved, and placed in the Canon of their sacred books.

JOB.

JOB, it is generally supposed, was contemporary with Moses; he possessed great Riches, and had a numerous Family, but is chiefly celebrated for his Patience, of which his history affords a remarkable Instance. His exemplary Piety, holiness, and charity, provoked Satan to solicit permission of the Almighty to try whether he would retain his Integrity, when deprived of his vast Possessions, mourning the Loss of his children, and suffering a painful and loathsome Disease. These great trials, however, only displayed yet more his Integrity and Patience, and though, when disputing with his Friends, he asserted, too much, his Innocence, yet his general conduct so pleased God, that he removed his afflictions, renewed his Family, and doubled all his former Possessions.

PSALMS.

THE book of Psalms was collected by Ezra, and contains one hundred and fifty spiritual songs, written by David and others. They are called Psalms, from a Greek Word, which signifies *to touch sweetly*, because, with the Voice was joined the sound of musical Instruments. Most of the Psalms have a particular title, signifying, either the Name of the Person who was to set it to Music, or that was to sing it; or the Instrument that was to be used, the tune to which it was set, or the subject and occasion of the Psalm. This book is justly esteemed as a Kind of abridgment of the whole scripture.

PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, AND THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

IN the book of Proverbs we find Rules for the conduct of persons of all ranks and conditions in life. The twenty-four first chapters contain what were delivered by Solomon himself; the five next, others of his that were collected by order of Hezekiah; and the two last belong to authors at present unknown.

The book of Ecclesiastes sheweth the Vanity of all earthly things, by various reflections on the evils of human life; from which we learn, that, *to fear God and keep his Commandments, is the whole Duty of Man.*

The Song of Solomon is supposed to be a spiritual allegory of the mutual Love subsisting between the devout Soul, and Jesus Christ.

ISAIAH.

ISAIAH prophesied from the end of the reign of Uzziah, to the time of Manassah, by whose order, according to a Jewish tradition, he was put to death. His prophecies may be divided into three parts. The first six chapters relate to the reign of Jotham, the six following to that of Ahaz, and all the rest to the reign of Hezekiah. The great and principal object of Isaiah's prophecies is the captivity of Babylon, the return of the Jews from this captivity, and the reign of the Messiah. And for this reason he is cited more than any other prophet, by the sacred writers of the New Testament.

JEREMIAH
AND
LAMENTATIONS.

THE prophecies of Jeremiah principally turn upon the sins of Judah, and the punishment which God was to inflict on them, by the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Chaldeans.—When God first spoke to him, it was in the fourteenth year of his age, and the thirteenth of Josiah's reign, and he continued prophesying till after the destruction of Jerusalem. Besides the book which contains his prophecies, we have his Lamentations in five chapters, which are mournful songs composed upon the occasion of those calamities, which befel Jerusalem in its declining state; and upon the entire destruction of it by the Chaldeans.

EZEKIEL.

EZEKIEL was a prophet of the house of Aaron, and carried captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, with Jehoiachim, king of Judah. He began to prophesy in the fifth year of his captivity, and as is generally thought, in the thirtieth of his age. The greatest part of his prophecy is easy, plain, and intelligible, referring chiefly to the manners and customs of that degenerate age in which he lived. Besides the Judgments he denounced upon the Jews and other idolatrous nations, he foretells the coming of the Messiah, and the flourishing state of his Kingdom. He was contemporary with Jeremiah, and continued prophesying twenty years.

DANIEL.

DANIEL, the prophet, was descended from the royal family of David, and carried captive to Babylon when he was yet very young; he was chosen to continue in Nebuchadnezzar's court, and made very great progress in all the sciences of the Chaldeans. His wisdom was remarkably displayed in his interpretation of the two dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, and his discovery of the first of them when that monarch had forgotten it. His piety was equally eminent, in persisting to worship the true God against the decree of Darius; for which he was cast into the lion's den, from where the Lord miraculously delivered him. His prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, and other great events, together with many other particulars related in his history, prove them to have been peculiarly directed and favoured by God.

HOSEA.

THIS prophet lived in the kingdom of Samaria, and his prophecies, for the most part, have a view to this state; though there are likewise some particular things which concern the kingdom of Judah. He began to prophesy about the end of the reign of Jeroboam the second; he inveighs strongly against the disorders which prevailed in the kingdom of the ten tribes, and threatens them with being carried captive into Assyria. He foretells also, that the people of Judah should continue sometime in their country after the captivity of the ten tribes; but that after this, they likewise should be carried captive, and that the Lord would bring them back after a certain number of years.

JOEL.

JOEL prophesied in the reign of Ahaz, after that the Edomites had smitten Judah, and used great violence towards them; and after the Philistines had invaded their cities, and slain and expelled their inhabitants, and were both of them triumphing in their success. Upon which account, God particularly threatens them, by Joel, in the latter part of the prophecy. In the former, he upbraids the Israelites for their idolatry, and foretells the calamities they should suffer, as a punishment of that sin, but he endeavours to support them, with the comfort, that their miseries should have an end upon their reformation and repentance.

AMOS.

THE prophecy of Amos begins with denouncing judgment and destruction against the Syrians, Philistines, Tyrians, and other enemies of the Jews. He then boldly remonstrates against the crying sins that prevailed among the Israelites, as idolatry, oppression, wantonness, and obstinacy. He likewise reproves those of Judah, such as their carnal security, sensuality, and injustice; and pronounces, that their sins will end at last in the ruin of Judah and Israel. But he concludes the prophecy, with comfortable promises of restoring the tabernacle of David, and erecting the kingdom of Christ.

OBADIAH.

OBADIAH, the prophet, is believed by some to have been the same with the governor of Ahab's house, and who hid and fed the hundred prophets whom Jezebel would have destroyed; while others say, he was that Obadiah whom Josiah made overseer of the works of the temple. Yet, when he lived or prophesied is uncertain, though most writers make him contemporary with Hosea, Amos, and Joel. His prophecy is contained in one chapter, and is partly an invective against the cruelty of the Edomites, who derided the children of Israel as they passed into captivity, and who with other enemies had invaded and spoiled them; while the other part concludes with a promise of deliverance and victory.

JONAH.

THE account the holy scriptures give of the prophet Jonah, affords some remarkable instances, not only of the power, but of the compassion of God, and his readiness to spare the penitent. His power was displayed in arresting the prophet by a storm, when he endeavoured to flee from his presence, and then, in causing a great fish to swallow him up, upon his being thrown into the sea to calm that storm, and after three days and three nights to cast him up again alive. In sparing the Ninevites on their repentance at the preaching of Jonah, and in his rebuke of the impatience and inhumanity of that prophet, by the incident of the gourd, we see the divine compassion and readiness to forgive.

MICAH.

MICAH prophesied under Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, for about fifty years. He foretells the calamities of Samaria, next he prophesies against Judah; he then again exclaims against the iniquities of Samaria, foretells the captivity of the ten tribes, and their return into their own country. He upbraids the judges, magistrates, priests, and false prophets, with their avarice, injustice, and falsehood, and tells them they will be the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem. He afterwards prophesies the glorious kingdom of the Messiah, and concludes with foretelling the fall of Babylon, and the re-establishment of Israel.

NAHUM.

THE particular circumstances of this prophet's life are altogether unknown, and authors are divided as to the time wherein he prophesied: some fixing it to the reign of Ahaz, others to that of Manasseh, and others to the times of the captivity. The subject of the prophecy of Nahum is the destruction of Nineveh, which he describes in the most lively and pathetic manner; and this prophecy was verified in the destruction of that city by the Medes. The style of this prophet is very bold and figurative, and can hardly be exceeded by the sublimest Poets, or the most celebrated masters in oratory.

HABAKKUK.

THIS prophet complains very pathetically of the disorders which he observed in the kingdom of Judah, and God reveals to him that he would in a short time punish them in a terrible manner by the arms of the Chaldeans. He afterwards foretells the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar, the miraculous punishment of his pride, and his death, together with what should happen to the Chaldeans after that event; and concludes with a song or prayer to God, whose majesty the prophet describes with the utmost grandeur and sublimity of expression.

ZEPHANIAH.

THE prophecy of Zephaniah began with the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, and contains three chapters. The first is a general threatening against Judah, and all the people whom the lord appointed to the slaughter. In the second, he inveighs against the Phœnicians and Assyrians, and foretells the fall of Nineveh. The third and last chapter has two parts, the first contains invectives and threatenings against Jerusalem; and the second gives comfortable assurances of a return from the captivity, and of a happy and flourishing condition.

HAGGAI.

IT was this prophet, who, by command from God, exhorted the Jews, after their return from the captivity, to finish the rebuilding of the temple, which they had intermitted for fourteen years. His remonstrances had their effect; and to encourage them to proceed in the work, he assured them from God, that the glory of his latter house should be greater than the glory of the former, which was accordingly fulfilled when Christ honoured it with his presence; for, with respect to the building, this latter temple was not to be compared with that magnificent one, which was erected by Solomon.

ZECHARIAH.

ZECHARIAH returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel, and began to prophecy two months after Haggai. These two prophets encouraged the Jews to go on with the work of the temple, which had been neglected for some years. Zechariah begins with an exhortation to the people, to be converted to the Lord, and not to imitate the stubbornness of their fathers. In his prophecy, which is longer than that of any of the lesser prophets, except Hosea, he foretells the coming of the Messiah, his humble appearance and his death, his victory over all his enemies, and the universal extent of his kingdom; the restoration of the Jewish nation, and the punishment of their enemies.

MALACHI.

MALACHI, the last of the twelve lesser prophets, prophesied under Nehemiah, and after Haggai and Zechariah, at a time when great disorders reigned among the priests and people of Judah. He inveighs against the priests for offering polluted bread, and despising the table of the Lord; he reproaches the people with having taken strange wives, reproves their inhumanity to their brethren, and other sins of which they were guilty. He lived above four hundred years before Christ, and prophesied of the coming of John the Baptist, and of the twofold coming of our saviour, the abolition of the sacrifice of the old law, and the establishment of a new and better covenant.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

ST. MATTHEW.

ST. MATTHEW in his gospel had chiefly in view, to shew us the royal descent or genealogy of Jesus Christ, and to represent to us his life, and conversation among men. No one of the evangelists enters so far into the particulars of the actions of Jesus Christ, or has given us so many rules for the conduct of life, and so many lessons of morality. If we compare him with the other three evangelists, we may observe a remarkable difference in the order and situation of our Saviour's actions. Some have imputed to mere chance this

variation in St. Matthew; and others to choice and design. However this matter may be, it can be no prejudice to the truth of the facts which are contained in the gospel; and as to the order of time the sacred writers are not always solicitous to follow it exactly.

ST. MARK.

As far as may be judged by comparing the gospels of St. Mark and St. Matthew, the first is an abridgment of the second. St. Mark very often uses the same terms, relates the same facts, and takes notice of the same circumstances. He sometimes adds new particulars, which give great light to St. Matthew's text. There are also two or three miracles in St. Mark, which are not to be found in St. Matthew. What is most remarkable in our evangelist is this, that though he follows St. Matthew in almost every thing else, yet he forsakes him in the order of his narration. He begins his gospel with an account of the preaching of John the Baptist, and omits several parables related by St. Matthew, and several discourses of our Saviour to his disciples and to the pharisees.

ST. LUKE.

ST. LUKE was a native of Antioch, by profession a physician, and for the most part a companion of the apostle Paul. Some learned men both among the antients and moderns have been of opinion that he was one of the *seventy*. St. Luke, on many occasions, seems to have had St. Matthew's gospel before him, and to have transcribed from that evangelist many passages, with very few alterations or variations. We are indebted to this historian for several discourses and parables of our Lord, not recorded in the other evangelists; and they eminently shew, how well adapted our Saviour's method of instruction was to reclaim, and to inform mankind. For, while precepts alone are soon lost to our remembrance, yet, illustrated and enforced by short moral stories, as the parables were, they can hardly be forgotten.

ST. JOHN.

THERE are recorded several instances of our Saviour's particular affection and love for the apostle John. For he permitted him with Peter and James, to behold his transfiguration, to see several miracles, to which, for want of room, only few could be admitted, to lean on his bosom at the paschal supper, to be present at his devotions in the garden; and to him, at his crucifixion, he committed the care of his mother. St. John was the only one of the twelve who attended the crucifixion. He saw our Lord expire. He was present at the several appearances of our Saviour after his resurrection, and hath given his testimony to the truth of that grand capital fact, on which the whole fabric of christianity rests. His gospel was written at Ephesus, and designed to be a supplement to the other three evangelists.

ACTS.

THIS book contains a great part of the lives of St. Peter, and St. Paul, beginning at the ascension of our Saviour, and continued down to St. Paul's arrival at Rome, after his appeal to Cæsar; comprehending in all about thirty years. St. Luke has been generally supposed to be the author, and his principal design in writing it was, to obviate the false acts and false histories, which began to be dispersed in the world. The exact time of his writing is not known; but it was, perhaps, while he remained with St. Paul during his imprisonment. Here, in the lives and preachings of the apostles, we have the most miraculous instance of the power of the Holy Ghost; and in the account of those who were the first believers, we have received the most excellent pattern of the true christian life.

ROMANS.

THIS epistle was written at Corinth, and sent by Phœbe a servant, or deaconess of the church at Cenchrea in the port of Corinth. The principal aim of St. Paul, the author of the epistle to the Romans, is to persuade them to a steady perseverance in the profession of christianity, by convincing them, that God is the God of the Gentiles, as well as the Jews; and that now, under the gospel, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. But besides the assurance he gives the Roman christians, that they were the people of God, without circumcision or other observances of the Jews, which is the main drift of this epistle, he has woven into his discourse the chief doctrines of christianity, and given them a comprehensive view of the dispensations of providence from first to last, in reference to eternal life.

I. CORINTHIANS

THE occasion of St. Paul writing the first epistle to the Corinthians was, that during his absence from Corinth, where he had planted the gospel, a new Instructor, a Jew by nation, had got in among them, and raised a faction against the apostle. His design therefore, in this epistle, is to support his own authority and credit with that part of the church which still adhered to him, to vindicate himself from the aspersions and calumnies of the opposite party, and lessen the credit of the leading men of it. This is the whole subject from the first chapter to the end of the tenth. The remaining part of the epistle is taken up in answering some questions they had proposed to him, and in resolving some doubts, not without a mixture, on all occasions, of reflections on his opposers, and exhortations to union.

II. CORINTHIANS.

ST. PAUL having understood the good effects which his first letter had produced among the Corinthians, wrote a second to them in the fifty seventh year of our Lord. He wrote from Macedonia, and probably from the city Philippi. In this epistle he speaks more freely, and deals more roundly and sharply with his opposers, as may be seen in several parts of it. The main drift of the apostle, in this letter, is the same as in the former epistle, namely, to take off the people from their new leader, and to put an end to the faction and disorder, which that false apostle had caused in the church of Corinth. He also in this epistle exhorts them to a liberal contribution to the poor saints at Jerusalem.

GALATIANS.

SOME disorders, which had crept into the churches of Galatia, occasioned St. Paul, who had planted those churches, to write this epistle. For some zealots for the Jewish constitution had almost persuaded them out of their christian liberty, and made them willing to submit to circumcision, and all the ritual observances of the Jewish church, as necessary under the gospel. Besides, their dissensions and disputes, about this matter, had raised very great animosities among them. The reforming them in these two points is the main business of this epistle. From what place it was written, is matter of dispute. Some are of opinion, that it was sent from Antioch, after the apostle's second journey thither; others think it was dis-

patched from Ephesus, after his third journey to that city; while others date it from Rome, when St. Paul dwelt there in his own hired house.

EPHESIANS.

WHILE St. Paul was prisoner at Rome, being informed that the christians at Ephesus stood firm in the faith, he wrote an epistle to them, in which he congratulates their steadiness and perseverance, and prays that they may be enlightened, so as to be able to see the mighty things done for them, and the immense advantages they received by the gospel. This epistle is not written in the formal way of reasoning and argumentation, but is all as it were, in a rapture. The apostle pretends not to teach them any thing, but couches all he would instil into their minds in prayers and thanksgivings, which affording a greater liberty and flight to his thoughts, he gives utterance, to them in noble and sublime expressions. The latter part contains practical directions and exhortations. It was sent from Rome by Tychicus.

PHILIPPIANS.

ST. Paul being in bonds at Rome, the Philippians sent Epaphroditus to him with a present of money, and by him, as he was returning home, he sent this epistle to them. He here testifies his great affection to them, and the value he had for them, especially upon account of their steadfastness in the faith; and thanks them for their former, as well as their late, kindness to him. He expresseth his hopes of a release, and of making them a visit. And to support them under persecutions, he directs them to consider them as occasions of joy and thankfulness. He urges them in the strongest manner to be unanimous, and concerned for each other's good, which would be a great comfort to him, as well as advantage to themselves; and concludes his epistle with several moral instructions.

COLOSSIANS.

ST. Paul had not planted the christian faith in person at Colosse, but was concerned, nevertheless, in the conversion of the Colossians, by sending other persons to them for that purpose, particularly Epaphras. He wrote, therefore, this epistle, to them, in which he expresses his great satisfaction at their constancy in the faith, and confirms them in it against those who would persuade them, as they had endeavoured to do all other christian converts, to the observation of the law of Moses. He also warns them against a mixture of Gentile philosophy with christian principles; and suggests some considerations to prevent their being offended or discouraged on account of his present circumstances, as he was in bond, for asserting and preaching the grace of God towards them. Tychicus and Onesimus carried this from Rome.

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I. THESSALONIANS.

AFTER he had been some months at Corinth, in the fifty third year of our Lord, St. Paul sent his first epistle to the Thessalonians; which is the first in order of time of all his fourteen epistles. The apostle instructs them concerning the last judgment, and about the manner and measure in which christians should be afflicted for the death of their relations.

He again intimates to the Thessalonians, the ardent affection which he had for them, and that he had already attempted several times, to have returned to them but his and their enemies had always prevented him. And should he, notwithstanding his earnest prayers, not be permitted to visit them again, he prays that they may be prepared to meet their righteous judge at his coming. He then gives them some practical directions suited to their peculiar circumstances.

II. THESSALONIANS.

THE second epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Corinth, a little time after the first. In it St. Paul animates the Thessalonians against the fears that certain persons had inspired into them upon a false interpretation of his former epistle, as if he had said that the day of the Lord was at hand. He exhorts them to continue stedfast in the doctrine that he had taught them, and to suffer with constancy the persecutions that were raised against them on this account. He reproves, more sharply than he had done before, those that lived in idleness and vain curiosity, and would have them take notice of these people and separate from them. He signs the letter with his own hand, and desires them to mark it well, that they might not be imposed on by forged letters written in his name.

I. TIMOTHY.

IN the first epistle to Timothy St. Paul acquaints him, that he left him at Ephesus to oppose the unbelieving Jews, and to warn the judaizing christians, to keep close to the apostolic doctrine, and to lay no stress upon their birth and genealogy; but to exercise charity, especially towards the Gentile converts, for charity, he declares is the design of the whole christian doctrine. Besides this, he ordains, that men should offer up public prayers, and teach in the church. That women should wear decent and modest apparel, and that their glory and ornaments ought to be their own good works; that they should never teach in the church, but be in subjection to their own husbands. Then, after several other directions for the government of the church, and cautioning them to avoid the false opinions of the judaizing christians, the apostle concludes.

II. TIMOTHY.

IT was but a short time before his martyrdom at Rome, that St. Paul wrote his second epistle to Timothy. In it he assures him that he constantly prayed for him, was mindful of his affection and tears, and longed to see him; because he was descended from pious ancestors, and was so pious and faithful himself, as well as endowed with many spiritual gifts, which he was to improve, more especially in a time of such great danger and common degeneracy; and rather to suffer for the truth, than be ashamed of it. The apostle declares this hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which God had appointed him to preach to the Gentiles. He acquaints Timothy,

that great numbers in Asia had deserted the faith, dissuades him from contending about names and words, and Jewish fables, recommends the study of the scriptures to him, and then with several other exhortations and instructions concludes the epistle.

TITUS.

In St. Paul's Epistle to Titus, he represents to him what are the qualities a bishop should be endowed with; as it was for this purpose that he was left in Crete, to ordain bishops over the several churches of the Cretans. The apostle also gives him a sketch of the advice and instructions he was to give to persons of different ages and stations. He exhorts him to exercise a strict authority over the Cretans, and to reprove them with severity; to oppose the vain traditions and fables of the Jews, and to shew that the observation of the law of Moses is no longer necessary. He directs Titus to remind the christians of their duty to their civil governors; to exhort them to avoid disputes and quarrels, to apply themselves to honest callings, and to shun the company of an heretic after the first and second admonition; and concludes with the usual salutations.

PHILEMON.

PHILEMON had a slave called Onesimus, who had robbed him, and then run away from him as far as rome. How St. Paul came to meet with him there, is not said: however, there the apostle, during his confinement in his own hired house, converted and baptized him, and kept him for some time to wait upon himself, till the truth and sincerity of his repentance was confirmed by his conduct. And when Onesimus was resolved upon returning to his master again, St. Paul wrote this letter in his behalf, sending it in his own name and in the name of his beloved Timothy, by the hands of Tychicus and Onesimus. The chief design of the Epistle was to reconcile Philemon to his slave, and now, as a christian he was a brother, to persuade him to regard, and place more confidence in him than ever.

HEBREWS.

THE Hebrews, to whom St. Paul addressed this epistle, were the believing Jews of Palestine, with whom he held a constant intimacy and correspondence. The design of it was to convince them, and, by their means, all the Jewish converts wheresoever dispersed, of the insufficiency and abolishment of the ceremonial and ritual law. In order to which, he undertakes to shew, first, the superior excellency of Christ's person above that of Moses. Secondly, the superiority of Christ's Priesthood above the Levitical. Thirdly, the mere figurative nature, and utter insufficiency of the legal ceremonies and sacrifices; and fourthly, that to forsake the Mosaical law was not, as the Jews boldly asserted, to aposta-

tize from God, but was their indispensible duty and obligation. These particulars are intermixed with proper inferences and exhortations, all tending to shew the Jewish christians the unreasonableness, folly and danger of relapsing into Judaism.

JAMES.

THIS general epistle, written by St. James the less, who is called the brother of our Lord, is addressed partly to the unbelieving and partly to the believing Jews. The writer's design was to correct the errors, soften the ungoverned zeal, and reform the indecent behaviour of the former; and to comfort the latter under the hardships the then did, or that they were likely to suffer, for the sake of the gospel. It is directed to the Jews and Jewish converts of the dispersion, but no doubt was calculated for the improvement likewise of those Jews, over whom the apostle presided in the special character of their bishop. This epistle is the first of the catholic or general epistles in the canon of scripture, which are so called, because they were written not to one, but to several christian churches.

I. PETER.

THE first epistle general of Peter is addressed to those Jewish converts who were scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, not only upon the persecution raised at Jerusalem, but upon former dispersions of the Jews into these places on several other occasions This is principally designed to comfort and confirm them under those fiery trials, and manifold temptations they were then subject to; and to direct and instruct them how to behave in the several states and relations both of the civil and the christian life, that they might not be engaged in those rebellions against the Roman emperor and his officers then fomented among the Jews; but that by their peaceable and exemplary deportment they might stop the mouths of those who spoke against them as evil doers, and recommend the christian religion to others by the good effects it had on their own lives.

II. PETER.

IN this second general epistle, St. Peter exposes, with an holy indignation and vehemence, the abandoned principles and practices of the false teachers and false prophets, who, in those early times, rose up in the christian church, and disseminated their pernicious tenets with such art and cunning; adapting their particular opinions to the vices of their disciples, and making the credulity of the ignorant minister to their lust and avarice. His prophetic description of the general conflagration, and the end of all terrestrial things, is very awful, and was evidently described in that minute and circumstantial solemnity to engage them to prepare for it. Hence the apostle exhorts them to a constant purity and holiness of life in expectation of this great event, and to consider the long suffering of God as designed to bring about salvation, as Paul had shown before in his epistles.

I. JOHN.

THERE have been many opinions concerning the persons to whom the first epistle general of St. John was written; but the most probable seems to be, that it was designed for the churches in Asia under St. John's inspection, and for all other christians, into whose hands it should come. With respect to the love of God, the subject of the first and great commandment, this apostle hath taught us to know it by the fruit of it; namely, loving our brethren and doing them good, and keeping the commandments of God. This he inculcateth through the whole of the epistle with an earnestness suitable to the importance of it. He then sheweth the use and mighty influence of faith, to produce that love to God and man, that purity of manners, and heavenly temper which distinguish the children of God from the children of the world.

II. JOHN.

Learned men have been divided in their opinions concerning the second epistle of St. John, whether it were addressed to an elect, or chosen church, figuratively called a lady, or to an honourable matron, who had contributed largely to the support of the christian church in the part where she resided. The latter opinion is, however, most generally adopted, and appears most probable. The apostle assures this elect lady and her children of the affection, which not only he, but all the faithful had for them, of the joy he received from finding they walked in the truth, and exhorts them to continue therein, and in love to one another, as the best way of shewing their love to God. He warns them of many deceivers, who had brought false doctrines into the church, and advises them to have nothing to do with such dangerous companions.

III. JOHN.

THE third epistle of St. John is directed to Gaius, whom the apostle commends for his piety and his hospitality to the members of the christian church, and to strangers; encouraging him to persevere in his good conduct towards them, as thereby he would assist in the propagation of the truth. St. John next censures the behaviour of Diotrephes who did not pay any regard to his directions, and not only refused to receive and entertain the brethren, but discouraged those who would relieve and entertain them. He therefore declares, that if, as he intended to do, he came to the church to which Distrophes belonged, he would remind him of his actions, and reprove and admonish him. The epistle is then concluded, with a caution to Gaius against bad examples, a commendation of Demetrius, and the salutation of his friends.

JUDE.

THE epistle of St. Jude appears to be designed for the use of all in general, who had embraced the Christian religion. It almost entirely consists of a spirited and most vehement invective against the abominable principles and practices of several profligate wretches, in these times, who pretended indeed to be christians, but disgraced their profession by the most abandoned excesses and the most atrocious enormities; turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, denying the true God, polluting their feasts of charity with intemperance and drunkenness, who were carnal and sensual, a reproach to human nature, and the disgrace of the christian name. These, and their scandalous vices, this holy apostle brands with an everlasting mark of infamy, to deter those to whom he writes, and all others in every future age from the same licentious principles and detestable crimes.

REVELATION.

The Revelation of St. John was written about the year of our Lord, 96, in the island of Patmos, whither that apostle had been banished by the emperor Domitian. It consists of twenty two chapters. The three first contain directions and encouragements, cautions and warnings to the bishops of the seven churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The fifteen following chapters contain the persecutions, which the church was to suffer from the Jews, Heretics, and Roman emperors. Next St. John prophesies of the vengeance of God, which he will exercise against those perseeutors. And in the last four chapters he describes the victory of the church over its enemies, the marriage of the Lamb, and the future happiness of all the faithful.

FINIS.

J. Cundee, Printer, Ivy Lane.